

## OPINION 1210

*PSAMMOPHIS SIBILANS SUBTAENIATA* PETERS, 1882  
(REPTILIA, SERPENTES): CONSERVED

RULING.—(1) Under the plenary powers, the species-group name *bilineatus* Peters, 1867, as published in the combination *Psammophis moniliger* var. *bilineatus*, is hereby suppressed for the purposes of the Law of Priority but not for those of the Law of Homonymy.

(2) The species-group name *subtaeniata* Peters, 1882, as published in the combination *Psammophis sibilans* var. *subtaeniata*, is hereby placed on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology with the Name Number 2801.

(3) The species-group name *bilineatus* Peters, 1867, as published in the combination *Psammophis moniliger* var. *bilineatus*, and as suppressed under the plenary powers in (1) above, is hereby placed on the Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Specific Names in Zoology with the Name Number 1096.

## HISTORY OF THE CASE Z.N.(S.)2165

An application for the conservation of *Psammophis sibilans subtaeniata* Peters, 1882, was first received from Dr Donald G. Broadley (*Umtali, Zimbabwe*) on 13 February 1976. It was sent to the printer on 9 June 1976 and published on 31 March 1977 in *Bull. zool. Nom.* vol. 33, pp. 214–215. Public notice of the possible use of the plenary powers in the case was given in the same part of the *Bulletin* as well as to eight general and one specialist periodical. No comment was received.

## DECISION OF THE COMMISSION

On 29 June 1981 the members of the Commission were invited to vote under the Three-Month Rule on Voting Paper (1981)6 for or against the proposals set out in *Bull. zool. Nom.* vol. 33, p. 215. At the close of the voting period on 29 September 1981 the state of the voting was as follows:

Affirmative Votes — twenty (20) received in the following order: Melville, Holthuis, Alvarado, Halvorsen, Mroczkowski, Vokes, Ride, Tortonese, Kraus, Willink, Hahn, Cogger, Habe, Heppell, Brinck, Binder, Bayer, Corliss, Nye, Welch

Negative Votes — Sabrosky, Bernardi.

Trjapitzin was on leave of absence. A late affirmative vote was received from Lehtinen. No votes were returned by Dupuis and Starobogatov.

The following comments were sent in by members of the Commission with their voting papers:

*Sabrosky*: 'This case is an excellent example of error and inadequacy that we are asked to legitimize by the use of the plenary powers. I find it impossible to approve.'

'The types of the two taxa in question, *bilineatus* and *subtaeniata*, existed in a well known and accessible museum but seem not to have been examined, respectively, until 1955 and "recently". Boulenger, 1895, "revised" *Psammophis*, at least to the extent of providing a key to the known species of the region, and he used *subtaeniata* for the eastern population and a new name, *P. bocagii*, for the western population, then considered distinct species, but did not mention *bilineatus*. We are not told of the usage between 1895 and 1940, but I assume that it followed Boulenger. If so, Loveridge in 1940 upset that established nomenclature by applying *subtaeniatus* to the western race and using *sudanensis* for the eastern race. In the interests of stability it appears that Loveridge should have followed Boulenger. All subsequent authors are said to have followed Loveridge, 1940, although only Loveridge, 1953, is cited between Loveridge, 1940, and Mertens, 1955 (post-1940 would have been a difficult time for much publishing). Mertens, 1955, examined the type of *bilineatus* and found it to be an individual of the western race, but he retained *subtaeniata*, the "established nomenclature in the interest of stability", even though it was contrary to the usage of Boulenger, 1895, and presumably others from 1895 to 1940. The type series of *subtaeniata* came from Tete and Boror, and the type locality was restricted to Tete in 1966, though restriction of type locality has no standing compared to lectotype selection. Only in 1977 was a lectotype selected. The selection now of a Tete specimen (western race) agrees with the revision of Loveridge, 1940, and the restriction of type locality by Broadley, 1966, but it disagrees with the much earlier distinction of eastern and western forms, then considered species, by Boulenger, 1895.'

*Bernardi*: 'Ces serpents n'ont certainement aucune importance médicale. Je préfère revenir à *bilineatus* de 1867, d'autant plus qu'il existe un nom pour désigner la sous-espèce orientale (*sudanensis*).'

## ORIGINAL REFERENCES

The following are the original references for the names placed on an Official List and Official Index by the ruling given in the present Opinion:

*bilineatus*, *Psammophis moniliger* var., Peters, 1867, *Monatsber.*

*Akad. Wiss. Berlin*, p. 237

*subtaeniata*, *Psammophis sibilans* var., Peters, 1882, *Reise nach Moçambique*, vol. 3, p. 121.

### CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that the votes cast on V.P.(81)6 were cast as set out above, that the proposal contained in that voting paper have been duly adopted under the plenary powers, and that the decision so taken, being the decision of the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature, is truly recorded in the present Opinion No. 1210.

R.V. MELVILLE

*Secretary*

*International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature*

*London*

*8 December 1981*